

LEGISLATIVE CONCEPT PROPOSAL  
For Interim Committee Consideration  
Sen. Mike Yakawich

Bill Draft Request Title: Statewide THC Education and Prevention Initiative

**PURPOSE**

This legislation establishes a coordinated, statewide THC education and prevention initiative to address the public health risks associated with cannabis use, high-potency THC products, and unregulated online or illicit market purchases. The bill provides dedicated funding and administrative structure to support sector-specific, evidence-based education and prevention programming across Montana.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT / BACKGROUND**

Montana continues to hear from schools, medical providers, probation and youth court personnel, behavioral health professionals, tribal communities, and families that clear, science-based education about cannabis harms and emerging high-potency products is insufficient and inconsistent across the state. While prevention programs exist, there is no coordinated statewide THC education strategy, and funding remains fragmented and unstable.

As product potency increases and online access to unregulated or black-market products expands, youth and adults are exposed to risks that include addiction, mental health complications, impaired driving, and accidental ingestion. A targeted, sector-specific statewide education initiative is necessary to provide consistent messaging, protect youth and families, and ensure prevention infrastructure keeps pace with evolving products and market dynamics.

**PROPOSED STATUTORY DIRECTION**

The bill would require the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to establish and administer a coordinated statewide THC Education and Prevention Program.

DPHHS shall award funds through a competitive grant or request for proposal (RFP) process to one or more qualified external entities with demonstrated expertise in public health education, prevention science, media campaigns, and sector-specific training.

The program must provide sector-specific education tailored to:

- Medical providers

- Consumers, including adults, parents, youth, and pregnant or postpartum individuals
- Vendors and retail staff
- Probation, youth court, and justice system personnel
- Mental health and addiction counselors
- Tribal communities

The selected entity or entities shall:

- Conduct a statewide inventory of existing THC and substance use education program
- Scale evidence-based or evidence-informed programs where appropriate
- Develop and implement a coordinated statewide public education campaign addressing high-potency THC risks and unregulated or illicit product purchases
- Develop sector-specific training materials and toolkits
- Establish measurable outcomes and performance metrics
- Coordinate messaging with state agencies and community prevention partners

DPHHS shall retain oversight authority, approve contracts, monitor performance, and ensure compliance with reporting requirements.

DPHHS shall submit an annual report to the Legislature detailing program implementation, expenditures, geographic reach, sector engagement, and measurable outcomes.

#### RESPONSIBLE ENTITY

##### **Lead Agency:**

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), Prevention Unit

##### **Required Coordination:**

- Office of Public Instruction
- Department of Justice
- Department of Revenue (as relevant to regulated vendors)
- Montana University System
- Tribal governments and tribal health authorities
- Local public health departments
- Community prevention coalitions

DPHHS shall coordinate with these agencies to ensure alignment of messaging, avoid duplication of existing prevention efforts, and support sector-specific implementation across education, health care, justice, and community systems.

**Administrative Oversight:**

DPHHS shall administer funds through a competitive RFP or grant process and maintain contract oversight of selected implementing entity or entities.

The Department shall provide an annual report and formal presentation to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, or its successor committee, detailing implementation, expenditures, sector reach, and measurable outcomes.

**FUNDING STRUCTURE**

Funded from marijuana tax revenue

Requires new appropriation

May require limited FTE within DPHHS for contract management and oversight

This legislation would establish a stable, ongoing allocation from marijuana tax revenue to fund the Statewide THC Education and Prevention Program.

A fixed annual appropriation of \$1,000,000 from marijuana tax revenue is designated for:

- Competitive grants or contracts awarded through a formal RFP process
- Statewide public education and media campaigns
- Sector-specific training and curriculum development
- Rural and tribal community engagement
- Independent program evaluation
- Administrative oversight by DPHHS

Marijuana tax revenue shall be the primary funding source for implementation. General fund resources are not required unless marijuana tax revenue is insufficient.

The program shall be subject to a formal evaluation review after three years of implementation, with findings reported to the Legislature to assess effectiveness, return on investment, and recommendations for continuation or refinement.

**REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY****Reporting Frequency:**

DPHHS shall submit an annual written report to the Legislature by December 1 of each year. Contracted implementing entities shall provide quarterly performance updates to DPHHS.

**Required Metrics:**

The annual report must include, at a minimum:

- Total funds allocated and expended
- Geographic distribution of services and outreach
- Number of individuals reached by sector
- Public campaign impressions and engagement metrics
- Number and type of sector-specific trainings delivered
- Evidence-based standards utilized
- Outcome indicators measuring changes in awareness, knowledge, or protective factors where measurable
- Evaluation findings and performance benchmarks

**Public Transparency Requirements:**

Annual reports, contracts awarded through the RFP process, and program evaluation findings must be publicly accessible on the DPHHS website. Expenditure summaries and performance metrics shall be presented in a clear and accessible format.

**Committee Presentation Requirement:**

DPHHS shall present the annual report and evaluation findings to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, or its successor committee, and respond to legislative questions regarding program effectiveness and fiscal stewardship.

**IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE****Effective Date:**

This legislation is effective July 1, 2026.

**RFP Release:**

DPHHS shall issue a request for proposal or competitive grant solicitation no later than October 1, 2026.

**Contract Award and Program Launch:**

Contracts shall be awarded no later than January 1, 2027. Program implementation shall begin no later than March 1, 2027.

**Initial Reporting:**

The first annual report shall be submitted to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2027.

**Ongoing Reporting Cycle:**

Annual reporting shall continue each year thereafter, with quarterly performance updates provided to DPHHS by contracted entities.

**ANTICIPATED IMPACT**

This legislation is expected to strengthen Montana's prevention infrastructure by establishing a coordinated, sector-specific THC education framework supported by stable funding and measurable outcomes. By directing marijuana tax revenue toward education and prevention, the program aligns public health investment with evolving product risks and community concerns.

The initiative will improve legislative oversight and transparency through annual reporting, independent evaluation, and clearly defined performance metrics. A structured statewide approach will support data-informed policymaking, reduce misinformation about high-potency and unregulated products, and provide consistent, evidence-based education across health care, education, justice, and community systems.